

Robot Seals as Counter-Insurgency

Friendship and Power
from Aristotle to Tiqqun

The Terrible Things We Do to Each Other

a lecture on anarchy
and friendship

The Fragility of Friendship

Jackie Wang

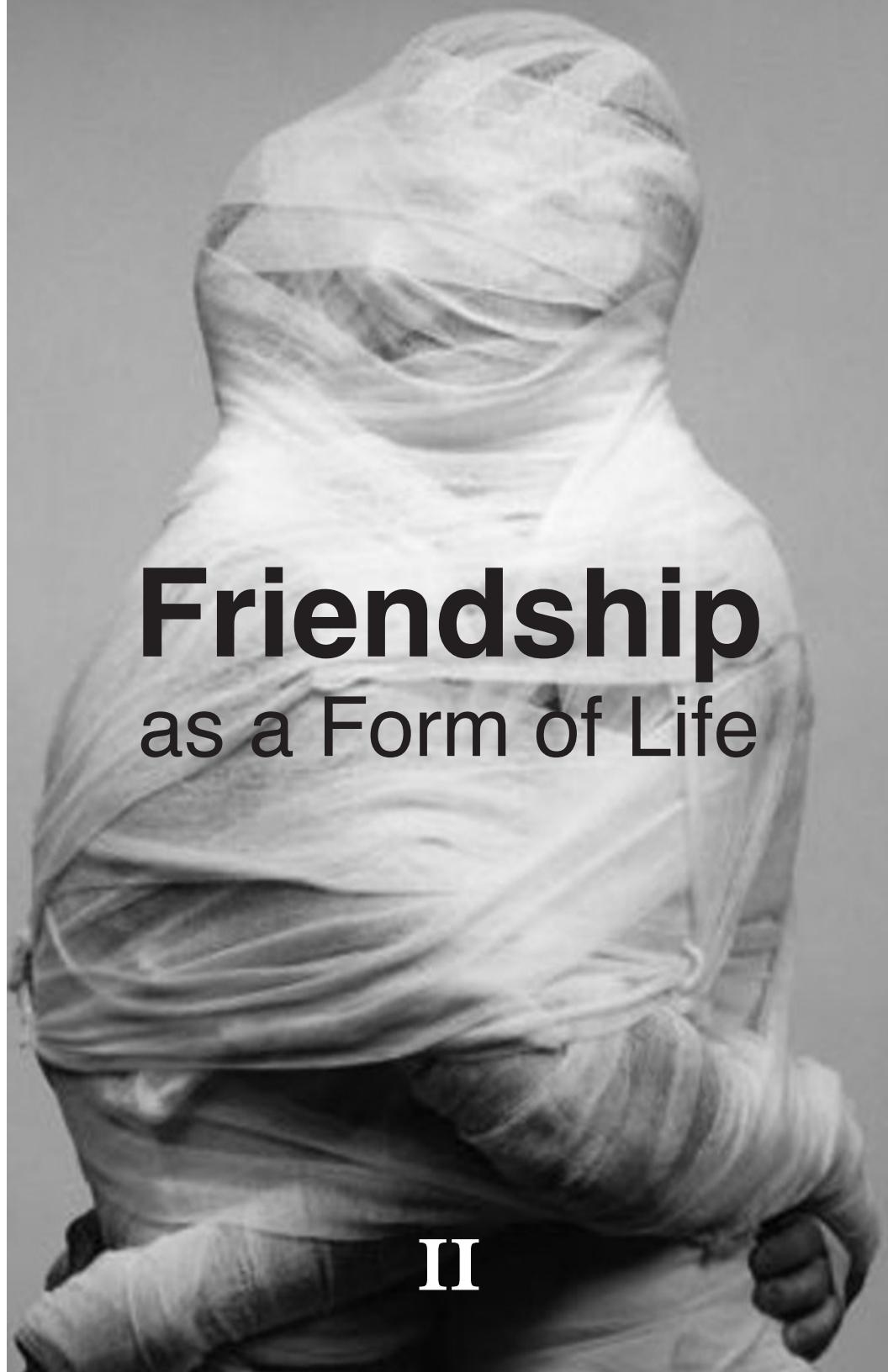
Love // Tarnac Seminar

Translated by Robert Hurley
Le Love Gang

Constellations

a excerpt

FRIENDSHIP AS A FORM OF LIFE // 2



Friendship as a Form of Life

II





"i need you like i need satisfaction"

friendship as a form of life

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To become imperceptible oneself, to have dismantled love in order to become capable of loving. To have dismantled one's self in order finally to be alone and meet the true double at the other end of the line. A clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everybody else; but this, precisely, is a becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody.

To paint oneself gray on gray.

- Gilles Deleuze

say that we must build the world we will inhabit. In many ways, we already do—the linkages that exist between places, between friends, the commonly traveled routes and annual encounters create patterns between us, whether we are aware of them or not. If we can look at those patterns, if we can see them in a different light, if we can bring intention to them and create new, experimental forms, we might begin to feel some of that light shining on us, the light of a distant, imaginary, and unreachable constellation that nevertheless enchants our own experience of this world.

The unfulfilled dreams and desires of humanity are the patient limbs of the resurrection, always ready to reawaken on the last day. And they don't sleep enclosed in rich mausoleums, but are fixed like living stars in the farthest heaven of language whose constellations we can barely make out. And this, at least, we didn't dream. To know how to grasp the stars that fall from the never dreamt-of firmament of humanity is the task of communism.

Excerpt from **Constellations**. Full text can be found at // <http://friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com>

Thought needs to move away from everything called logic and common sense, to move away from all human obstacles in such a way that things take on a new look, as though illuminated by a constellation appearing for the first time.

To look at each other and the world in a different light, “as though illuminated by a constellation appearing for the first time,” or by the light of those constellations that will never reach us, is to consider what is around us in strange and new ways. And, perhaps, to consider each other, to consider the way that giving form to a thing, naming a collection of stars, imbues it with meaning. We contain within us so many overlapping maps of enmity and affinity, and we are created each day by each other and by this world. And we must remember that nothing—not a constellation, not a self—can ever be understood in isolation.

Walter Benjamin knew the necessity of the communal for encountering the stars:

The ancients' intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance [Rausch]. For it is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights.

Unseen constellations; affective and ethical linkages between us; secret cartographies and modes of travel. Perhaps we could view these things as political components of a celestial navigation, a way to navigate through this world, with each other, to maintain reference points which might not exist, or which might be too far away to see. Perhaps we can form the very constellations by which we navigate. Others might simply

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Full text, audio and other zines can be found at //
<http://friendship-as-a-form-of-life.tumblr.com>
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Proposition I // Encounter

There are those who appear absolutely foreign, who compose the *hostis*, for whom oddly only either hostility or hospitality would seem appropriate. These are obviously not friends, but they are not necessarily enemies. To take that leap would require that one come to know the other as singular, that is, in a singularity. Such an event inevitably requires an encounter.

1. There is no indifference in the encounter. In the absence of any relation there is the *hostis*. Every real relation follows from the affection of each encounter. An affection is the singular experience I have of each other: the way its body acts upon mine.

2. To know one as singular suggests one has at least an idea of the other. These are often, unfortunately, only affection-ideas: a reflection of the other's affection on your body. This is a certain consequence of one's limited experience of an encounter; a representation of effects without their causes. If enjoyable, one could call it a crush: the positive possibility of only chance encounters.

3. There are those we like: mere acquaintances, we share moments, not our lives. Experiencing only chance encounters, one might remember enjoying the other's affection and proceed to develop one's own notion of the other. In the absence of the other you only enjoy your own idea of the other. Such a deficit elicits desire. While lacking, we share nothing. In these ways, notion-ideas are always insufficient.

4. The affect of each encounter pertains to power. Those encounters I enjoy make me more capable. They increase my potential to act, my very force of existing (*vis existendi*). This is to say: I become more powerful. As the mist of misery clouding everyday life clears, there appears one path from which power grows: friendship.

Agamben, observing the night sky, remembers the unnumbered constellations that move away from us more rapidly than the speed of light; their light will never reach us. They account for the darkness and void in between our named constellations. To be contemporary is "to perceive, in the darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot."

The light of our time obscures the present, blinds us with its brilliance. All existence seems coated in the same cold blue-white glow of screens, or the bland consistency of millions of isolated stars, combining their light but nothing more—a dull homogeneity, a uniform way of perceiving the world. This is the consequence of living in a world in which the political nature of truth has been erased by the supposed objectivity of science. And yet sometimes that homogeneity falters. We observe a singular place change form and take on new qualities under different lights—a pond that reflects the changing seasons, that becomes an inferno with the sunset, an inky pool of reflected stars at night, a shifting and ever-changing gray even under the dullest low-hanging clouds. Or a friend's face, which looks so different illuminated by pulsing blue and red lights or flash-bangs than it does by candlelight or the warmth of a home.

Likewise, the light from stars falls on us differently. For astronomers, who barely look at stars anymore, favoring computer analysis and radio telescopes, it falls as a spectrum. They can tell us how hot a star is, whether it is fleeing us or approaching, what planets might disturb its light with every rotational wobble. They give it predicates, identity, class. For others, starlight is spectral; it is cold, ghostly, it illuminates without regard for difference, it renders our world unfamiliar. In the frigid starlight we might recognize our loneliness and the indifference of the planet. For ancient sailors, navigating by constellations, starlight was a guide, a stalwart companion that could always help you find your way. And, perhaps, there are other ways to see this world by the light of the constellations:

CONSTELLATIONS

It's four light hours to the confines of the solar system; to the closest star, four light years. A disproportionate ocean of emptiness. But are we really sure there is only a void? We only know that there are no stars shining in that space. If they existed, would they be visible? And if there existed bodies that are neither luminous nor dark? Could it not be that on the celestial maps, the same as on those of Earth, the star-cities are indicated and the star-villages are omitted?

We form constellations. Our bodies are never isolated, are always enmeshed in shifting patterns of relations. Scattered across space, our selves form patterns, trace connections ethical but unseen. They give us consistency and form outside of our solitude. When we make our connections material, our constellations take shape, become tactile, make worlds.

When constellations congeal, take form, gain substance, the individual light of single stars ceases washing over us in a bland sameness. Commitment, sharing, friendship: our actions trace and retrace ruts that make a certain type of relation habitual. Our constellations grow depth, begin to inhabit a world. But a constellation is never ossified, is never a brittle, fragile thing; is never a skeleton, its bones unchanging until shattered by exigencies. Constellations are moving, shifting; they are born of relation, give form to relation, and change as relations do. At their best, they are contemporary.

Orion is just a handful of atomized stars until it is imbued with meaning, becomes a hunter roaming the skies with weight and consistency, myth and story. The light that shone from the Drinking Gourd in the 19th century American South is different than the light that shines from the Big Dipper. One represented freedom and traced, literally, a line of flight out of slavery; the other is a pot.

ROBOT SEALS AS COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Friendship and Power from Aristotle to Tiqqun

I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant. When I write, it's everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love. In one another we will never be lacking.

-Helene Cixous

I was listening to the radio the other day and heard a story about robots and friendship. The narrator, an expert in computer programming and artificial intelligence research, described her visit to a nursing home with a group of students and a friendly robot seal named PARO. PARO is a fuzzy, cuddly automaton of a harp seal. It responds to touch, speech, and basic emotional cues; it trills, purrs, and acts like a friendly, cuddly pet. The narrator described seeing an elderly dementia patient interact delightedly with the seal. Her face brightened, she smiled and laughed, and the students were excited at the possibility of providing cheap emotional care to thousands of lonely nursing home residents across the country. The narrator was horrified. She saw it as a cheap replacement for human connection, and as yet another way to obscure the social needs of the elderly.

I was likewise horrified, listening to the radio, but my mind immediately went elsewhere. I think there is a lesson in this story, and in this trend of affective robots and internet

relationships and emotional needs fulfilled by machines, that touches on deeper themes of friendship, politics, and the possibility of becoming dangerous and powerful. What is at stake in this accelerating replacement of real relationships with robotic proxies is not a loss of some authentic human need, but the eradication of any alternative to individual neoliberalism. Robotic pets and social networking represent the logical end of a society bent on crafting an ideology of individual development, self-entrepreneurship, and attenuated relationships.

Philosophers rarely tire of speaking about friendship, but I would like to trace a common strain that casts friendship as subversive and powerful, beginning with Aristotle and running through Spinoza, Nietzsche, Cixous, Agamben, and Tiqqun. The trail is a little crooked, but ultimately it reaches the same conclusion as that of contemporary insurrectionaries, be they inspired by *Politics is Not a Banana* or Bonanno: friendship is political, and affinity is a more powerful foundation for revolt than identity.

Agamben reaches back across two millennia to Aristotle in order to understand friendship as a desubjectifying process. By its nature, close friendship destabilizes subjectivities and makes singularities non-equivalent. Just as citizens in a liberal democracy must be considered equivalent, so does friendship eradicate equivalencies; it is impossible to understand a friend as part of a set, but only as another whose existence changes one's own. Friendship is based on a proximity too near to perceive one's friend as anything but another self. That is: "friendship is the instance of this concurrent perception of the friend's existence in the awareness of one's own existence.... The friend is not another I, but an otherness immanent in selfness, a becoming other of the self."

So Agamben uses friendship to envision a communion of singularities without predicates; he argues explicitly that "friend" cannot be a category in the same sense as "white" or "Italian" or "hot", but that it rests on an impossibility of representation. Cixous echoes this Aristotelian linkage of

beautiful literary attempt to invent a strong cohesion that's not bourgeois, not sheltered. Among other things, this is because it's based on characteristics, on anomalies, differences, and what is explored is not what one has to be – despite a great urgency, but how to hold together – what a collective body is.

We're not looking for a vaccine against love sorrows or impulses that are too powerful; we're looking to shape ourselves in that forge, achieving a common form. It's in this movement that affects are transformed and nuanced, not like something planned. It's useless to pretend.

Epilogue

When Love drove up to me, in its candy-pink Mercedes, I stayed on the side of the road, and I climbed into a rotten Ford, because I'm an idiot fool.

Your turn now,

- Le Love Gang

Tarnac Seminars, summer 2013.
translated by **Robert Hurley**

example. Maybe also, scission [*cisaillement*], appetite, or enjoy, [*jouir*] and come. And then there are their possible articulations, their rules of agreement, and their declensions, to play [*jouer*] with. In language, too, of course, but not only. Sometimes I'm thinking that I love you, but I know it's only lust.

It would be a little too easy to close without addressing the untimely statements of François Fourquet in *L'Idéal historique*. We've reproduced a passage from *Suppôt* in the attached fragments. Not to take what's said there into account, to pretend to still believe in the erotic harmony of the group, in the sense of a kind of pacified self-management of emotions, would be to deny how most of the seventies collectives came to ruin over who was having sex with whom [*histoires de cul*].

But Fourquet speaks in this book from a position of *ressentiment*. When he frees up the preindividual passions, there always remains an I that's armored against the rest of the world, which is to say, his former comrades. He overlooks one thing, a basic principle of the art of magic: what traverses me also binds me. Yes, it is possible to assume a chaotic and unsettled vision of the world, but it's also possible to live there, and to construct firm attachments between us.

To assert that the libido might be simply liberated, so that it might recover its putative, savage, original form, deeply destructive of every possibility of advancing together, is to try the same ploy as the war of all against all: blackmail, in the form of truth-telling, the exact reversal of blackmailing with the myth of a great Love lost.

We were born among ruins, and that is where we're learning to dance. We are packs, because when we stop being that we're overcome by fatigue. We are, which is to say that we must learn to become that.

Willing the pack existence; or, since the natural bond cannot be subjected to the will, appealing to the pack; to our natural relation with the pack, the thing that makes us sniff out the little groupings, to see if they can be brought into the clan. *La Horde du Contrevent* [the horde against the wind] is a

friendship and perception in "The Laugh of the Medusa": "I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant." There is no category "friend", just as there is no "community"; there is only the experience of becoming friends, and of finding power in one another. And power, the element that is missing in Agamben's discussion of friendship, is where I turn to Spinoza, through the lens of Tiqqun and Deleuze.

Tiqqun draws heavily on these concepts of friendship, of communion, of a rejection of predicates, but the weight of their politics comes from Spinoza's concept of power and relation. For Tiqqun, the alternative to a subjectivity defined by its predicates and therefore governable by Empire is the form-of-life, an ethical way of relating to the world that is defined by a how rather than a what. The form-of-life is a linkage of thought, and penchants, and power; not the having of opinions, but the exploration of what we are capable of. This concept of power and the characteristics of singularities is cribbed directly from Spinoza. Deleuze tells us that for Spinoza "what counts among animals is not at all the *genera* or *species*; genera and species are absolutely confused notions, abstract ideas. What counts is the question, of what is a body capable?" Once again we have a rejection of predicates in favor of power and potential: it is useless to distinguish between things based on their predicates when we should be asking what a thing is capable of, and by what can it be affected. So following a form-of-life is the experience of exploring what one is capable of at any given time, what one can affect and what one might be affected by, an ongoing experiment in power and intensity that might end at any time. And, at stake in exploring one's power is the question of by what one is affected. Everything is affected and affective; some substances or people might affect me joyfully, and increase my power, while others affect me sadly, decrease my power.

He never mentions the word friendship, but in his lecture on Spinoza Deleuze addresses the same concept as Agamben

and Cixous above, but in the context of power: “[i]n an affect of joy, therefore, the body which affects you is indicated as combining its relation with your own and not as its relation decomposing your own. At that point, something induces you to form a notion of what is common to the body which affects you and to your own body, to the soul which affects you and to your own soul”. The experience of encountering the friend affects one joyfully, makes one powerful, forms a commonality between the self and the friend; as Agamben says, the friend is “a becoming other of the self.”

But in order to experience this friendship, in order to experience the growth of power that comes with being joyfully affected by another, one must be open to being affected. One cannot be closed off but must remain vulnerable. To experience friendship is to take a risk, but one that pays off powerfully, even if negatively. If one risks being affected by another, and discovers that they are affected sadly, that another’s power grows at their own expense, then they have learned something about themselves, and about what they are capable of. They have discovered an enemy, which is as powerful as discovering a friend. This is what Tiqqun means when they define civil war as the free play of forms-of-life, and when they remind us that we are bound to both our friends and our enemies: the former because our power grows together, the latter because “in order for my power to grow, implies that I confront him, that I undermine his forces.” This is also why Nietzsche tells us that “[i]f one would have a friend, then must one also be willing to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must be capable of being an enemy.” Friendship requires a putting-at-stake of oneself, an intensity that corrodes identity and predicates and grants power, that breeds communion but also conflict. Friendship becomes a way of erasing the myth of the individual, a method for finding power and intensity, and the framework for a communist politics with teeth.

If we see friendship as dangerous, as a technique for undoing the processes of subjectification that make us legible to Empire, then we can begin to understand the tactics that

the intimate/public dichotomy. What’s important is that this knowledge is bound to increase the pleasure itself, as a way, a path of truth; Whereas the *regime of truth* about sex in the West is normally confessional.

As a scarecrow on this path, there is of course a scientification of the “Oriental” erotic arts, a way of thinking that they can be extracted from their worlds. There are beacons, a few adventurers: Anaïs Nin, for example, Bataille, or certain feminist practices.

Next, our worlds, where loving is involved. In this regard, we would talk about the encounters in situations where we feel taken up in a new intensity, whether it’s in a shared everyday scene working on a common project, a theater play, or a house; or in the midst of social movements, demonstrations going beyond the simple scenario projected by the prefecture.

Love as an upsurge is in fact the strongest potential the encounter can contain, not the communication of one entity to another, but an overwhelming affect. And just as one cannot live in quest of the political event only by pursuing the intensity of the riot, one can’t be satisfied with the peak intensities of the encounter.

Trying to make an intensity last would be more a matter of keeping it perpetually fresh. Metamorphosing it would appear to be a precondition of this continuity, a determination to stay sensitive to movement, to cultivate a wariness of the love of forms, a readiness to shatter forms when they’re no longer anything but that. We have our own capacity for promise and fidelity. Rituals or their absence also condition allegiance to a religious, moral, and social order, or a dedication to its destruction.

To finish with incompletes, we’ve evoked a grammar of affects. Love imparts gradations to the affects - a little, a lot, passionately - on a quantitative scale that masks the swarm of differences within me, when I’m leaning in that direction. It’s a term that’s hard to connect with others. In a grammar there would be a lexicon, a comfortable way of living with certain terms. Like faithfulness, pact, intranquillity, friendship, for

other only as a dangerous relationship of competition.

But what could save love?

Some friends recently reaffirmed the formula “don’t place love before friendship.” Some remnant of the rule of reason puts me off as I reread what we’ve written. Does it convey some mistrust of the body, of the irrational, of abandon even? A form of political correctness? Actually, no, I think I see what it’s about instead: draw what affects me toward the common, the open assemblage, rather than toward what Western love is said to result in: a foreclosure onto itself.

We’re advancing, and it seems less and less evident that we wanted to “smash love,” as someone put it; instead we lay claim to what is contained there, disruption, tension straining beyond the self, embodiment, abandon, pleasure; we seek not to free it by force from the couple bond, but to let it overflow, infuse, nurture. Another problem with a word; if love is that Western apparatus that transforms us into emotional illiterates and communal illiterates, then to hell with it. If it is the impetus that moves me outside myself, we should no longer leave the term to the enemy.

This presentation is a step, which brings our research to an end. The road is long, that leads to redemption. To whet the appetite, here are a few cracks through which a bit of light shines, we trust.

Presence, called *duende* in the practice of flamenco, is the bringing of bodies into play in the dance. So, a certain presence to oneself, to the other who is there, and to the world; which means that one is always situated, and not simply multiple. That one can dance without music goes without saying.

And there is eroticism. Foucault in his history of sexuality says that our civilization is one of the few that don’t have an erotic art, but only a science of sex. An erotic art, that is, a sensual knowledge relating to pleasure, to its capacity to deeply move the body and soul, and which operate through initiation. There is a certain idea of disclosure as well, of the precious and not shameful secret, a way of getting out of

Empire uses to keep us powerless. There is a global counter-insurgency being waged by apparatuses of control concerned by the way that we decadents and lost souls respond with anger and riots to our circumstances. The worst nightmare of Empire is interiority; just as we are concerned that the citizen next to us could transform into a cop at any moment, so is Empire concerned that any citizen might, at any moment, reveal himself to be a terrorist, a hacker, or a looter. It is the desperation of existing in a world in which we are told we can be anything and must re-shape ourselves constantly to the needs of the market. Is the uncertainty of existence blended with the inevitability of debt and isolation that drives the terrorist in her moral certitude, the school shooter in his generalized anger, or more dangerously, the rioting excluded that begin to find power together in their collective looting of jewelry shops and Foot Lockers.

The causes are linked, of course. Anti-social violence, depression, the human strike: these are the methods by which the disaffected wage war on the world that makes them so; they greet the nihilism of the market and identity with the nihilism of rage and despair. It is exactly these attenuated relationships, this individual responsibility, the exhaustion with which we re-craft our identities online, that renders us destabilizing as individuals. And Empire responds with new techniques and new apparatuses. If affect has become so important now, in the academy, in robotics, in computing, it is because that is what we are so desperately missing. And so, if affective care is what the businessman is missing, then he is granted the local sex-worker, or the outsourced web-cam girl or phone-sex operator from across the world: not just for sex, but for a sensation of care and connection. If the marginalized youth insist on demonstrating their disaffection through rioting and burglary, then they are granted meaning through Facebook relations and Twitter feeds; if they insist anyway, then at least their Facebook accounts can be used to track them down and imprison them. If the entrepreneurs that drive our markets feel guilty, at times, that their parents are rotting

away in isolation in a nursing home, then give them robotic seals to assuage their guilt. The market will provide.

For if we do need to be affected, if a world of constantly shifting identities leaves us feeling alone and depressed, then the worst outcome for Empire would be for us to find one another in our sadness. To become what we need to each other, and to find power in friendship, is to become dangerous. So we are provided with a variety of placebos that give us the sensation of friendship and care without putting anything at stake. This is the insidious nature of social networking, of robot seals, of the market solution to our needs: it is an expansion of attenuated relations into the most intimate parts of our lives, granting us the illusion of friendship while robbing it of its potency. If friendship is a destabilizing, empowering, desubjectifying process, it is bitterly ironic that its substitutes rest ever more firmly on our identities and predicates: the analysis of our tastes and our performance allows Facebook to suggest ever more specified products and activities that further entrench us in identity. The refinement of social networking algorithms matches us effortlessly with others “like us” on OkCupid; robbed of anything to work on, we work on ourselves, and we can find new sets of friends or lovers as quickly as we can change our profile. Calls for civil discourse and celebrations of the marketplace of ideas rob ideas of their vitality and make us mere commentators on our own lives. The re-imagining of friendship as an always-revocable status experienced through shared opinions and internet trends is the perfect mirror of democracy: a collection of commensurate individuals without vitality, whose affinities can change as easily as their politics, and as equally without weight.

The world tells us that we are responsible for ourselves, that we must make ourselves marketable. We must develop our abilities to find employment, groom ourselves to outshine the competition, invest in our human capital so that our future returns might grant us comfort and wealth. We are told that our care is in our own hands—not only the care for our health, which becomes an individual responsibility through private

We should start from what is present, in the interest of amorality perhaps, but also because we know how it makes no sense to deny it, that this only gets in the way of thinking, of stirring, of letting something different occur. Start from beauty and possible strength, without judgment. It’s remarkable, really, that between the couple and liberalism, we’re only able to relate to our loves as something shameful.

Which is to say, we ought to no longer look for the answer but learn how to unsettle, to rescue desire from the *confessional regime*. Nature, construct our imaginary, Illouz might say; because love would only be the actualization of what was already dreamed. Yes, that too, nurture our imaginary, instill in us that which affects us deeply: but not only, and certainly not as an injunction to tell each other everything.

Certain friends were able to say several years go, “A communist ethos would be one where those who shared it would be prepared to make an orgy happen, a moment, too, when each one might be thrown back on their own hurts, and when the greatest attention would be required.” And others: “If I were to define the old world, I would say that the old world is a certain way of linking affects to gestures, affects to words, it’s a certain sentimental education, and we definitely don’t want any more of that one. If I were to define the orgy it’s every time one or the other sets about unhinging the link between the affects and the gestures, between the affects and the words, and then others do the same.”

Along the way, we’ve come across some magical formulas. “Don’t place love before friendship,” for example. Or “there are no unhappy love affairs.” “I decree a state of permanent decolonized joy.” None of them will prevent anyone from being in love. Or sad. However, they do deeply transform what can happen starting from there.

Morals, even those we vaguely endorse, can only engenders dirty little secrets. There is a certain way, then, of starting again from our attachments and of defending them, to pull them away from our penchants for submission, from our need of valorization, which isolate us and cause us to know the

even into households. At the same time, it contributed to limiting the strategic potential of the groups that were organizing against the return to order. Singular dramas became collective ones and this served to multiply the stakes of words, struggles, and decisions, highlighting the distance between ethical requirements and the strategic possibility of the moment. The active critique of an ideology of masses generated the potential for a capillary revolution and an anticipation of the very restructuration of Capital. But what possibility of a common offensive could arise from the promotion of that new subjectivity which would not betray the ethic of this We that wants everything, now? So it's not a matter of establishing a new feminism but of averting a repartitioning between politics and affects, private and public, masculine and feminine.

VI. Loving, inescapably // Finally, finally, it took a lot of talent to be old without being adult

Weeks talking about love and something eludes us.

Giordano Bruno differentiates between three types of bonds: natural, rational, and voluntary. They act in different ways, on separate planes, and concerning love he says that those who attempt to subject the bond of nature to the bond of reason or of will are inferior to the beasts. Well, what follows has to do with the art of bonding—and unbonding.

But this should be taken seriously: no theory of love, received by a simple decision, can tell us how to love. Love was not invented by the troubadours; desire and the unconscious don't have any of the rigid forms assigned to them by psychoanalysis. It is not unchanging or eternal, and yet irreducible to decision; a field of forces that traverse, affects that entail others, images and meanings that bind a body, an affect, what befalls me, what I make of it. It is a sympathetic domain, typically, where the use of magic is called for. Magic. Words, gestures, images, drugs, rituals, spells. How love-you leads to want-you, how love is not friendship. How the two of us is a beginning or an ending.

health insurance and gym memberships and fitness regimes—but the care of our minds, our souls, our emotions, through yoga and meditation and Prozac and therapy. Self-care is the necessary corollary to self-entrepreneurship: it is individual, expensive, and renders us toothless. And self-care, in its attenuated radical mirror, becomes non-hierarchical therapy sessions and alternative medicine. When an imprisoned anarchist cited mental health challenges as an excuse for shamelessly snitching on her former comrades and friends, far too many supposed comrades rushed to her defense. Snitching is never acceptable, her apologists cry, but she had past mental trauma! let us seek to understand and forgive her. Who are we to judge? This is once again the neoliberal imperative for self-care and responsibility slightly inverted.

If there is hope, it lies in reinterpreting the concept of the self and of friendship. In this way, the common anarchist refrain seen on posters across the U.S. – be careful with each other, so we can be dangerous together – is understood in a new light. Rather than a call for fragility and respect, or for “safe spaces”, we can understand it as a call for an intense exchange of care and friendship that makes us dangerous. When a friend is sent to prison or beaten by the police, it is likewise an affront to our very core, an assault on our other selves—our heteros autos—and we can only respond by waging war. In a world that makes self-care an individual responsibility and a tactic of control, we must repurpose it by redefining the self: not as some singular entity, but as that which is co-created through the process of friendship. Self-care becomes a call for intensity, then, a binding together of our futures, resting on a willingness to be vulnerable and open to being affected. This is what is at stake with robot seals, and the true danger of such affective technology. The only response is to become that much more firm in our commitment to friendship.

In one another we will never be lacking.

Text from <http://no-new-ideas-press.tumblr.com>

Proposition II // Friendship

Are we friends? This question permeates every encounter, each awkward interaction and the very concept of community. Yet, more often than not, we find ourselves unable to answer definitively. Affects of elation only orient us towards those we could call friend. Friend and enemy are ethical-political concepts. One is not a friend; friend is not what an other is.

5. What remains between us? There are the predicated relations of identity. We know each other as anarchist, queer, woman or whatever notion we use to understand the other and worst ourselves. This idea becomes the very basis of our shared joy of a common misery. Hence the inevitable anarchist communities where the following tautology is applied like a mantra: we are friends because we are anarchist; we are anarchist because we are friends. These impoverished relations never leave the realm of representation that is always already appropriated by politics. Affective affinity therefore becomes political affinity, encounters, meetings and sharing, potlatch.

6. Even the most distant communists still find it possible, if only ironically, to call each other *comrade* - though they do not know the etymological prerequisite of "living together." This is not the living-together of animals around the watering hole, nor is it the co-op, or even what you might call community. The "living together" meant by *comrade* is sharing - making common - everything: ideas, affects, and the power they produce. This is how we become a material force. The commune is not a place, it is absolute sharing between friends.

7. The encounter itself reveals that our perception and power of existing is always already shared. In this way, we start from the shared joy of each other's presence. To the extent that we continue to encounter each other and that such events remain enjoyable for us, one could say we are well on our way to being friends.

of impossible love can be countered less by a consciousness raising of individuals than by an art of relating, a magical art if there ever was one, and a certain taste for abandon.

We've decided to continue sharing the insights we think we've had, and what remains from what friends have tried before us, after this discussion around the contemporary romantic pain; it didn't seem possible to stay within this domain at a sociological distance, as captivating as it is.

V. Since one has to choose, I can say it in my turn // In which we won't let a new feminism again become the arbiter of how we love and how we think about the structures of desires that occupy us, at a distance from a communist strategy

We're seeing a rupture in the 70s between the narratives of those struggles that constituted revolutionary possibility in the West and what has been transmitted to us from that time, mainly on the question of affects.

There is a point that we've not gone beyond since the 70s. The space for massive, collective, and political questioning of ethics, of how we love without betraying ourselves, has closed off again. Old questions have congealed into figures, of the guard-dog feminist or the avant-garde revolutionary. The powerlessness of institutional feminism as described by Eva Illouz, its inability to renew a possibility for play and attachment that is the basis of the power of loving, does not surprise us therefore.

The questioning has not disappeared, but the way in which we can raise the questions is very much more lacking. The humor of the FHAR [*Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire*] "CRS/SS relax your butts, leftists too" as well as the determination of the Rote Zora or the sting of Mayakovsky's verses are what touches us, inspires us, in past struggles.

The Italian feminist movement was a source of constant questioning that spread the revolutionary spirit of the period

IV. Special partner seeks special partner

// Existential liberalism; Eva Illouz

The contemporary coincidence of these developments, the atomization of individuals, the persistence of love myths, the agony of marriage rules, the exploitation of the affects, give shape to what we have called existential liberalism. It would be a mistake to try and connect this vision with libertinage alone, and with the accumulation of conquests. The movement is deeper. What becomes apparent rather, even in the “traditional” search for a marriage partner, is the way in which the tacking of affects onto value has become generalized. The way in which “relational capital,” “seduction capital” and other crap invented by 80s dickheads have become a reality, and actually make up much of the new romantic landscape.

What Illouz has endeavored to describe, and what led us to invite her, are the social mechanisms that mold and condition sentiment. Which is to say, not just its expression but the very way in which it assumes forms, and in which the subject projects itself onto them. We invited her because this particular figure of the epoch, this particular way of wanting to believe in love, while reducing the latter to symptoms, is both massive everywhere around us and doesn't leave us unscathed ourselves, truth be told.

The observation appears lucid to us, and we would like to question some of the roots more in depth. The link between feminism and the redefinition of the sphere of sexuality, for example. To understand in order to dismantle, everywhere, in ourselves as well, this love that while remaining impossible, has become vaguely pathetic.

That said, we don't just start from this distress. And it's hard to feel nostalgic for the bourgeois loves of the Victorian age.

After “why love hurts”, we might ask ourselves what draws us so strongly to this particular form of enchantment, to this taste for suffering and the absolute. We might remind ourselves that we're struggling against a magic by means of a stronger magic, not a science of sex; that a whole mystique

THE TERRIBLE THINGS WE DO TO EACH OTHER

I. THE QUESTION OF FRIENDSHIP

What is so pleasant as these jets of affection which make a young world for me again? What is so delicious as a just and firm encounter of two, in a thought, in a feeling? How beautiful, on their approach to this beating heart, the steps and forms of the gifted and the true! The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metaphorphosed; there is no winter and no night; all tragedies, all ennuis, vanish—all duties even, nothing fills the proceeding eternity but the forms all radiant of beloved persons. Let the soul be assured that somewhere in the universe it should rejoin its friend, and it would be content and cheerful alone for a thousand years.

— Emerson, “Friendship”

So, hello friends.

Already a problem here, friends. All the earliest philosophers noted that philosophical matters are best discussed among friends. So then apparently we have a problem before we even begin—are we in the proper setting to even be having this discussion at all? If philosophy should be discussed among friends, one would think this lecture format inappropriate for communicating anything worthwhile. We should perhaps be sipping wine and smoking cigarettes and letting our minds wander from topic to topic. We should be wandering the town committing indiscretions and contemplating the implications of our actions. After all, don't lovers ponder love while lying next to one another in bed, where they are able to make the most of their discoveries and follow them through to their logical conclusions?

I think it would be fair to say pieces of this lecture are a sort of taking up of the *Letters Journal* challenge to break language like a window. If you listen closely, perhaps you'll catch it. If you've taken a philosophy course, maybe it will be pretty clear. A lot of this is free and automatic writing, so you'd be able to destroy what I say if we were allowed a period of contemplation. But we're not allowing that, right, you're only hearing the words, not reading along with anything, and we're not going to revisit anything I say. What I want to try is: Oh, here's a trash can, will this work? What about PVC pipes? Or bricks? Hammers? And even if any of these work, we're not trying to break the window that is the end of windows. It's a practice, a practice of breaking language, over and over, continually, giving it force and meaning and weaving these practices together with others, also breaking language or writing poetry or writing windows.

Who are you? How do I call you friends? What does this mean? And more importantly, if this is to have any meaning, how shall we put our discovery to use?

Given also that this is supposed to be a lecture of anarchy and friendship, perhaps it would be first prudent to elaborate that concept. For us, anarchy shall mean the state of affairs, or the attempts at moving toward such, that wholly rejects capitalism—that is to say, any form of quantitative logic, productive relations based on calculated reciprocity, economic relations mediated by money, and access to resources granted by social privileges—and the state—any system of horrible violence which coerces obedience and exacts punishment for misdeeds.

If some of you wish to make political use of the thought in this lecture, then we should begin here: before we claim to wish to build a politics based on a particular word—communism, anarchism, friendship—we need to understand what is meant by the use of the word. If up until now we have been able to function together in spite of our different uses of the words we hold in common, then perhaps all is well; but perhaps also we will find a day when our irreconcilable definitions make

question in a workshop.

With this disruption of the relation to self, its whole entourage is affected as well. The family, the couple, the clan... The individual is what flees from any form of ties that reflect back its own powerlessness, so that where it flees one finds the symptom of a withdrawal into oneself. It matters little what form this may take. From libertinage to the couple, from the ménage à trois to asceticism. The contemporary packaging of the normopathic—norm-sick—couple appears to be a coupling of individuals in which the defensive processes armor themselves in order to bear what each “one” suspends in the way of disjoint desires.

What confines us to sentiment is especially this distance, the self as a fortress to be valorized through the relation with the Other. We don't condemn any forms in themselves, but we distrust the form as a proof of love. The love of proofs -- “Do you love me?” “If you don't give me your Facebook password, it's because you don't love me” – has that little confessional aspect that one finds at the shrink's or on the pillow.

Thus, loving as an encounter, as a world to come, as a disposition, would move us beyond anticipation, would push us to take on the consequences and the encounters as moments of turmoil [bouleversements]. This is what would channel desire towards what is shared in each instance. As W. Benjamin said, “there's no unhappy love affair, only dangerous friendships.” Being affected by a situation, an encounter, may be what moves us beyond sentiment and what always disrupts the very enunciation of love or its rituals. We seek to rid ourselves of the logic of sentiment, understood as standard affects, in order to experience an interplay between functions, complementary anti-phallogocentric, anti-static, relations, and an opacity that allows for the unforeseen emanating from the Other. What we would call a dyad is a relation between functions that complement or conflict with each other; Where the game of seduction or war is not played out between persons or genders but dispositions, points-in-tension necessary to the same dynamic.

new connections to other worlds, etc... Which is also to say that there is no form that is not in motion, that is not already aiming somewhere. "What does it mean to love someone? Always to pick them out of a mass, extract them from a group, even a small group, in which they participate, even if this is through their family or something else; and then seek out their own packs; the multiplicities they harbor within them, and which are perhaps of an entirely different nature. Join them to mine, make them penetrate mine, and penetrate theirs. Celestial nuptials, multiplicities of multiplicities (...) No love that is not an exercise of depersonalization on a body without organs to be formed; and it's at the highest point of this depersonalization that someone can be named, receive their name or first name, acquire the most intense discernibility in the instantaneous apprehension of the multiples that belong to them and to which they belong." *A Thousand Plateaus*

A description by Cesarano of what it may mean to love in the erotic insurrection, where it's not the movement of an individual towards an object:

"When the love object, the fetish of being, becomes transparent, to the point of revealing itself as a path, a movement, a moment of fateful apparition, initiation, when the opacity of the object and the fascination of the fetish are lost, the lover perceives not the foundation, but the beginning of the possible being... now sees love as conquest and overcoming, communion beyond the self, struggle for life, concrete and pragmatic communication of the possible, as insurrection."

This being said, both these texts are 40 years old. We would need to dissect the modifications brought about during those 40 years in terms of the reterritorialization of capitalistic flows and the retooling of the self by cybernetics. *A Thousand Plateaus* is a historical fait accompli which we can take up again, revise, in a sort of upgrading to version 2.0. The latter would take account of the Taylorization of the private man where to each apparatus there corresponds a partitioning of the self, with its effects of isolation and independence. Yes, ça escapes, scatters, fragments. And it gets captured. We'll explore this

us wholly unable to communicate any longer. This is really just another way of saying we need to first "define our terms." For communism or anarchism or liberation, OK, that seems easy enough. But friendship? What could we even mean by a politics of friendship? Friendship has a billion histories and as many meanings. The intensity with which we use the words needs to be matched by an intensity of thinking in common.

At first glance, and perhaps because I have already a position on the issue and so have framed it as such, one feels a particular affinity between the two concepts. After all, as I've described it, what is friendship but the anarchy of the relation between two loving bodies? And what is anarchy but a global system of friendship? But this would really be an oversimplification, of both terms. Anarchy, or anarchism, after all, is not merely some noble ideal, but a particular constellation of projects and rebellions over the past two centuries aimed at overthrowing the ruling social order. It is a history of peasants ransacking town halls and government buildings, of conspiracies assassinating dozens of heads of state and capitalist magnates. Sometimes it fails, it fails at itself in its very being itself. It is the calculated project of shooting landowners and collectivizing land in Spain in 1936, of strikes and demands and riots across the United States, and a thousand other insurrections with and without flags aimed at wrecking the landscape to find out what happens when we attempt to live without these practices of calculation and obedience which have dominated our forms of life for centuries and millennia.

Anarchy is not the mere extension of the offer of friendship to anyone. And there's something to our notions of friendship that suggests a universal friendship would not necessarily lead to the kind of world we are interested in. There's something peculiar about that idea. Friendship has its own history; it has billions of histories, and the rich and powerful monsters have friends no less than we.

Yet somehow here we are: anarchy, friendship. This lecture is less a proposal than an attempt to bridge the gaps in our thinking, a first movement in a direction, toward what

really I don't know. Let's keep that in mind.

I just took a break from writing this and had a thought, which I'll insert here and then see where it goes. When I said friendship before, when I say friendship, perhaps we are thinking of different things. After all, if friendship for each of us has its own history it obviously has its own meaning; we each use the word in different ways with different understandings. We might suddenly find ourselves on different planets, speaking different languages, alienated, isolated, and alone. The exact same touches, words, and gestures suddenly convey such different meanings.

Doing philosophy is a way of putting our ideas together, gathering together from wherever we are, starting again from there so we can have this discussion. Maybe your understanding of friendship is one that, if applied universally, would or could somehow result in anarchy or the chaotic world we want. So, when I say friendship is a thing we have yet to figure out, you are confused. Friends, to you, perhaps, are obvious, more obvious than any political movement or ideology. We would disagree here, and our conversation would get sidetracked as your thoughts took you in the direction that I must be a fool, or megalomaniac or solipsist or sociopath, to say we have no idea what it is to be a friend, who is a friend, that I do not know whether or not you and I are friends.

So then, to begin to unsettle your understanding of friendship, I must begin again, from a different position. After all, this is supposed to be a philosophical lecture—and to be honest, when I'm not trying very hard to understand what a "friend" is in doing, I spend most of my time away from friends reading books. Let's look at what Aristotle said of friendship, if only to use that as a starting point to get us on the same page. And then we can go from there, and we will try to figure out if when we use "friend" we are saying the same thing, if we even know what we are saying.

it ties, which in conceiving of itself as an individual can only think of the rest of the world as a sum of foreign objects. Let us be clear about this: a hermit who's made a mountain his skin is less of an individual than whatever little soldier of the cooperative economy.

This takes a precise and concrete form in the descriptions that Eva Illouz gives of the individuals she meets, who are trying to confirm or increase their value through love. It's what we have called existential liberalism, something that we'll revisit together. The number of Facebook friends, for example, is another measure of self-worth, similar to the assessment of any other product that I "like" or "don't like."

The individual, as a perception of the self, induces a certain way of being in the world, a certain regime of absence.

This being the situation, we attach ourselves to love as a capacity for being affected, for making a world, and precisely for unmaking the fiction of the individual through the deployment of desires (Cesarino), singularities, and incongruous attachments that invite us to become other. To end our powerlessness means to connect with what is there, to come up with some magic, to commonize what is properly mine, to rearm desires with their offensive charge.

In *L'Idéal historique*, Fourquet asserts that the individual is only the agent, in the sense of police agent, invented to bring good order to the preindividual tensions and fields of forces. A fictive unit, necessarily moral, set against life as pure will to power, as libido and desire for consummation. In other words, there are two ways to go beyond the individual, either via the mass, the social class, the negation of that which differentiates, or via the multiple that constitutes me.

In Anti-Oedipus, and in fact in most of their writings, this is the starting point for Deleuze and Guattari: "I" is not a monad surrounded by objects. I is a world, a machinic assemblage, a certain nexus [nouage]. To love is not to project a closed ego towards another closed ego, hoping to make a two-part unity. It is to assemble [agencer], to destabilize and to map out new lines of escape [lignes de fuite]. We make ourselves capable of

going beyond critique. But linking love and the individual was based on the premise that there's no invention of a way of loving (or bonding) that is not at the same time a position-taking on the question of the subject. So love in the West would be inseparable from its corollary, the individual. And becoming capable of loving and leaving the individual behind would be the same movement.

Those wishing to get rid of the individual were quickly referred to a handy caricature of authoritarian collectivism. Moreover, one must beware of the kind of newspeak which, because it has deleted the word from its dictionary, would believe it was done with that perception of the self.

The construction of the individual was demanded and experienced as a liberation, becoming an emblem of liberalism. And the gradual affirmation of the individual did in fact put an end to many moral rigidities, many conservative social habits connected with the family or tradition, and many authoritarian regimes. In this there was an explosive force which modernity has brandished like a weapon against every community, which it continues to brandish, in its wars against Islam, for example.

But like Don Juan without morality, the individual who no longer has a community to betray finds himself facing his void, like the figure in Steve McQueen's film, *Shame*.

The advent of the individual has meant the production of oneself as a coherent structure of qualities. Whereas value was first established as a mode of evaluation of human productions, in this instance it's human beings themselves who are expected to construct their self-representation as something valorizable. Love can thus be the moment of recognition of my likability or seduction: "capital." This mutation has been called the anthropomorphosis of capital, the production of man as a thing, that is, as a valorization of self-produced qualities, a projection of self as a finished product.

The individual of liberalism—the citizen—is the atom, the primary and indivisible component of the social. It is identical, but grafted with a set of attributes, qualities, and preferences. It is above all the fiction of a being cut off from its world, from

Fine to lie in quiet together,
Finer still to join in laughing—
Underneath a silken heaven
Lying back amid the grasses
Join with friends in cheerful laughing,
Showing our white teeth together.

Am I right? let's lie in the quiet;
Am I wrong? let's join in laughing
And in being aggravating,
Aggravating, loudly laughing,
Till we reach the grave together.

Shall we do this, friends, again?
Amen! and auf Wiedersehen!

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*

II. THREE TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP

O my friends, there is no friend!

A quote from Aristotle, coming to me by Derrida in citing Nietzsche citing Montaigne in what is perhaps a mistranslation of Aristotle that, nonetheless, provoked and courses through Derrida's book *Politics of Friendship*, the book that is largely responsible for my rambling up here today. Such mistranslation and misquoting will perhaps form the backbone of what follows in my attempt to do philosophy, so bear with me.

How could Aristotle, who writes two chapters on friendship in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, declare there are no friends? If there is no friend, then how could I call you "my friends," my friends? If I call you "my friends," how dare I add that there is no friend?

Friendship, then. What's most important for our purposes is not this misquote—this "supposed" misquote—but really Aristotle's take on three forms of friendship. So, while you

and I may have what we think is a pretty good understanding of friendship, Aristotle breaks it down into three categories of friendship. There are friendships of Pleasure—this is essentially the idea of Lovers—friendships of Utility—we have here political and economic friendship—and then friendships of Virtue—the exemplary friendship, the best friendships, the friendship based in Aristotle's ideas of Virtue and the Good. It's actually fairly difficult to use Aristotle's forms to get us anywhere meaningful, not the least because we do of course reject his ideas of Virtue and the Good. But we can come to that bridge when we cross it.

First, we have the friendships of pleasure and utility. Aristotle criticizes these because these are both rather selfish forms of friendship. That is, friendships of utility dissolve as soon as they cease to be to the friends' advantage. Likewise, friendships of pleasure collapse as soon as the object of pleasure no longer gives the expected form of pleasure. The friendships of these forms are not based in the virtue of the other but in what we take from them, what they do for us. What's most contradictory here is that these forms of friendship, most prone to collapse, are built on the promise of their own stability.

Let's take the utilitarian friendship, since this is what Aristotle calls the political friendship and since our lecture is supposed to be on anarchy—which, while it isn't really, or at least it shouldn't be, a political concept, we find many people treating it as such. The promise of certain political friendship is that one party is useful for the other, both parties find use in one another, and so an alliance is formed. Perhaps in the anarchist camp we find this as two bodies identifying one another as having this extremist ideology and then also doing something that appears to be a way of putting this ideology into practice—say, a variety of community projects or organizing efforts, or maybe it's just the desire to riot and therefore making use of one another as objects of riot. The friends involved see the utility in one another and make use of it. This isn't a condemnation of the friendship of utility—

capture them in a rational social organization, redirecting that energy towards the general interest. That is, the desires and affects of the individual were put to work for something greater than the individual: Western Society. It's our misfortune to attest that in our day the commodification of the sensible has become very effective.

Going further in our reading of these figures, we can discern two forms of mania [vertige]. That of Don Juan is horizontal, it's the mania of quantity, of the absolute search for novelty. The following reply issuing from Bertolt Brecht's version illustrates the idea: "A heart beats within me that would love the whole world. Like Alexander of Macedonia, I wish for other worlds that I could subject to my love power."

Sade's mania is much less acceptable for society because it's a vertigo of depth, a descent into the abyss where the intolerable progression of criminal passion is enacted.

One should bear in mind that in the context of a redefinition of love and of the individual, the reigning and ever more pronounced confusion of these notions entails an exaltation of myths that indicate the paths to follow in order to exist in the social fabric. The danger of Sade and Don Juan is in having placed the individual above everything, thus accentuating the crisis of presence. Confusion is one of the West's implacable weapons.

These figures do not follow a historical sequence. One can't choose one of them in preference to the other, as one might commit to the "major" or the "minor" of an apparatus. Rather, they suggest the two poles of the landscape in which we endlessly play about and quarrel.

III. I got my tits, I got my breath, I got my soul, I got my hair, I got my ass... // in which one understands that love, which adapts so well to individualism, might also be the best weapon for ripping it apart

This day has changed its title more than once. We have gone from "love and the individual" to "loving" as a way of

pagan doctrines, is applied only to the relations of Jesus with Peter, Lazarus, and “the disciple who loved”. Love (of God, of one’s neighbor) becomes central to the detriment of friendship, whose multiform use had been predominant among the Greeks, comfortably representing both an intellectual friendship and an erotic one. Our hypothesis is that love is a monotheism of feeling. More than two thousand years of the Church’s rule of love has deeply anchored it.

The Don Juan myth interests us as a myth that deteriorates in relation to its interpretations, its commentaries, and its immersions in our forms-of-life. It begins by presenting itself as the symbol of an aggressive atheism, overturning divine power by destroying one of its embodiments: conjugal love. Don Juan is a noble who breaks up couples; he seduces, he scorns and crushes the romantic aspirations of young women about to be joined in marriage. Don Juan is well and truly a Western myth insofar as this figure of desire, a desire that’s elevated into a life principle, becomes a generator of new values and new means of knowledge.

On this path, the figure of Sade accompanies that of Don Juan by sharing this objective: the defeat of Christian power by ensuring the primacy, the triumph, of individual desire. On the other hand, what differentiates Don Juan and Sade is that the latter subjected his gestures to a process of reflection. Don Juan is a pure movement of desire, possessing no reflexivity, and this explains the failure of his unbridled run of desire. He doesn’t discover anything, he doesn’t know anything, he is unable to love.

These two figures emerged in the century of Enlightenment. They faced off in response to the urgency of the times, which was the need to redefine individuality and self-possession. Hence their power of fascination. It was a moment when the Christian representation of the world was in crisis, when the notions of Good and Evil lost some of their dualism and gained some confusion. And this confusion was all the more vertiginous where desire and the passions were involved. The project was thus to socialize the passions, to

I’m merely pointing out what specifically is going on. But friendship based on this principle is easily subject to collapse: when I get burned out, injured, tired, arrested, suddenly I am no longer able to be put to use by my friend.

I think the trick here, really a good move on Aristotle’s part, is in his pointing out that the utilitarian friendship isn’t just political, which is the aspect Derrida tends to focus on, but also economic. The idea of “economic friendship” is a bit of a stretch for some of us, but let’s just hold the thought. We can imagine how two businessmen might engage in business—say, the trade of books or something—and in the course of business they consider one another friends. They act as friends might: they chat, give each other things, go out to eat. More importantly, they have a trust with one another that is very near the essence of friendship.

But it is a particular trust, based on a particular development of their friendship. The book buyer never expects his friend to give him books, and the seller never expects more than the fair price. Their friendship is based on this calculated equality. It’s not difficult to imagine that the friendship as utilitarian friendship would quickly wither if the one’s printing press or the other’s bookshop closed down. As friends of utility, neither of them imagine differently. But they have between them a mutual understanding of the terms of their friendship. A friendship formed on fixed conditions is a “legal friendship.” This is perhaps one way of overcoming the arbitrary collapse of friendship, but the threat lingers.

So, here we have a central point of contention with our understanding of anarchy and friendship: it seems that, for Aristotle at least and likely within our Western political notions of friendship, a calculated equality is a way to maintain our friendship.

Friends of pleasure likely lack this strictly economic understanding of one another, but we see how that makes the threat of collapse that much more present. Our passionate friendships burn much brighter than our utilitarian ones. The businessmen have a clear understanding of what is and is

not a part of their friendship, and this is perhaps one way of overcoming the arbitrary collapse of friendship. But we want no serious contracts in our friendships, right?

Aristotle's third form of friendship, true friends, good friends, friends of virtue, are the friends I have around me. Well, no, we're certainly not friends of virtue (some of you can perhaps guess who is around me at the moment.) But the highest form of friendship, which, obviously, I must think I share with those around me now—Aristotle would note these friendships too are comprised of utility and pleasure. But the character of virtue, the virtue of the other, is also some magic glue that holds friendships together. We obviously want to discard this idea of virtue, at least as Aristotle regards it, as something toward which to strive and which holds us together. Let all virtues collapse that our friendship may continue. But let's consider virtue as a sort of empty placeholder for the whatever that holds us together as friends. We are each thinking of something different here, and probably different for each of our different true friendships, but that is the point, I think. We'll get to that.

What is really important, that I'm giving short order here, is that the true friendship, like the one offering me this cigarette, gives me both pleasure and utility, but it is not reducible to these. It is something else, something whatever.

What this form really offers for us is the suggestion of a friendship grounded in a whatever outside the selfishness of either party, a type of friendship based on the adherence to a set of values or external conditions—we would say, a set of practices—which bind us together. This is the ideal friendship, probably the friendship of which most of us speak when we say we want a politics based on friendship. It is the friendship in which we would say “something in my soul recognizes something in your soul,” a pure friendship. This is not to say it excludes qualities from the other two forms of friendship—this friendship is both pleasurable and utilitarian, but it is not reducible to these acts; pleasure and utility spring forth from a well of virtue—or whatever.

In particular, we put a lot of effort into applying this method of working to courtly love, into detecting the points of emergence of a new art of loving, the entrance of a religious mysticism onto the profane stage. For Denis de Rougemont, courtly love, as an elevation towards an absolute, is a poetic expression of Cathar mysticism which quickly lets itself get caught in its own confusion: the Lady, from being a divine part of the soul, becomes a mere mortal lady. There's no reason to be surprised, then, to find in this figure the most pronounced traits of monastic life: adoration, contemplation, mortification. A veritable worship of the Lady by her lover. Courtly love functions as an apparatus insofar as it captures the multiple amorous passions in a sublimated form, and liberates their subversive potential (adultery, destruction of blood ties, clan ties and loyalty) while containing it (extreme codification, impossibility of love's fulfillment). It makes the Lady-Wandering Knight couple the ultimate expression of love, in the acute form of an autism for two.

But this conception of love is not peculiar to the West: “In the 7th century, in the Arabian desert, the Arabs, more specifically the Bedouins, invented what was to become a theme destined for immense success: perfect, impossible, unhappy love. Majnun and Layla, the two heroes of this story, were the distant heralds, or cousins of our Werther, Romeo and Juliet or Tristan and Isolde. If love cannot be fulfilled, it's because the lovers cannot love one another freely.” (André Miquel, *D'Arabie et d'Islam*) Something should be made clear in this connection: the West is not a geographical area. It constructs an elsewhere for itself, an otherness to study, an enemy to combat, an adversary to despoil, to engulf, to incorporate. It is an expansionary movement reaching for the whole known world; it is imperial.

Christianity is one of the main vectors of this expansion, in its perpetual redefinition of love. Thus New Testament Greek privileges the use of the term *agape* to say love. *Eros*, the carnal god of the Greeks, is set aside, and *stergein* (family affection) is used very little. *Philein*, too marked by ancient

against this world.

It's hard to talk about loving outside of certain circles of friends. Affects remain in the realm of the intimate, of drives, of what is unquestioned (or difficult to question). And everyone knows that desiring, in matters of love, does not directly produce the desired effect. It could be, too, that this domain is that of the greatest exposure, and that too often we have confused the idea of power with that of invulnerability, and consigned what filled us with doubt and made us cry to the unspeakable or the personal. It's been a while now that we've been saying we need a "new sentimental education."

Ah, happiness is so near! Ah, happiness is so far away!

II. The fresh eruption of a volcano believed to be extinct is a common occurrence // Contrary to what you might expect, what follows is not a genealogy

There is not sublime, absolute, eternal Love, and its constant capture by Power, by Civilization. Part of the difficulty of speaking about love from a political position is owing to this: it's not an absolute constrained by social norms that would simply need to be broken to liberate all its potency. The idea of a genealogy stems from this recognition.

Modern love of the sort that we experience, that we feel, today is the result of multiple conflicts, of many combats, for which existential liberalism is but the latest battlefield. To construct a genealogy of love would be to look for the sites of these confrontations, the historical moments of this war, to rediscover what was defeated and what came out of it victorious, what is still in contention. It would imply a refusal to return to its hypothetical origin, to consider it as something self-evident, as a linear phenomenon.

In this regard Foucault invites us to focus our attention on the smallest details, which historians ordinarily overlook, and to be good scholars. In the time allotted to us, we were obviously unable to cover the whole history of love in the West, so we singled out certain figures.

So then: friendship, the three types of friendship. Pleasure, utility, and, the one we have largely neglected with perhaps good reason, virtue.

III. VIRTUE AND FORM OF LIFE

Why, then, this neglect of virtue? Well, to be honest, because I haven't read Aristotle's chapters on virtue and so making it the emphasis of this essay as a description of how we should do friendships is really beyond me. Nevertheless, my loose understanding of what is meant by virtue and Aristotle's treatment of virtuous friendship in the *Friendship* chapters reveal it as something we must reject if we are to achieve the chaos of love and friendship we so madly desire.

To begin again—why friendship and politics? For Aristotle, "the properly political act comes down to creating the most possible friendship." This is a bit clarified, perhaps, when we utilize Nazi philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt's concept of the political—that the "political" is the act of declaring friends and enemies. His desire, in a nutshell, in understanding this concept, is the suppression of the political within a political order—the suppression of difference and conflict within a society. By defusing the intensity within society with which people made themselves—that is, how they declared friends and enemies—the State would reduce all bodies to mere citizens, lacking the intensities of love and enmity that created discord. In this reduced position, as *hostis* [Latin for "enemy"], citizen bodies unknown to one another would find their only friends in the State, which would also then define their enemies and have total control over their form of life.

A bit of a bastardized paraphrasing, for sure. Continue to run with me. For Aristotle, the *telos* or end-goal of the State is the Good Life. The ideal State is one that allows its citizens to dwell in virtue. And so here we have it again, that damn virtue. We can excuse Aristotle for not having seen the horrors that follow in the wake of all those grand projects of virtue, and certainly I need not list them for you. But this really is the crux

of the problem, the problem of government and collectivities generally but also this problem of friendship, which we still haven't pinned down. We won't blame Aristotle for not being a nihilist, but really—this is a man who believes in good and evil, and metaphysics. I doubt he'd even heard of historical materialism. His attempts at defining and discovering virtue are virtuous, but what it reveals is something else—that which Aristotle defines as virtue is virtuous for a particular form of life. Certainly we don't expect wives to obey husbands or peasants to obey kings, so we can no longer call these things virtuous. This is why we discarded the notion of virtue and used it as kind of a placeholder. That is, we can reject Aristotle's universal virtue for the idea that virtue, the object of the good life, is simply whatever is the object of a particular form of life.

I'm trying to use philosophy here to cross a few borders and get from Aristotle's descriptions of "friendship" to Agamben's prescription for the whatever singularity. Hang tight. Agamben uses the term form-of-life (with hyphens) as a way to say "the good life," a life that cannot be separated from its form, in which the restriction of the possibilities of life is simply impossible. What is "good life," what is good for each form-of-life is simply happiness, however that form-of-life might define it.

He takes the term from a linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein, who used the term in a radically different way. For Wittgenstein, form of life is simply a shorthand way of saying all of the environmental, historical, sociological factors that create the conditions for us to understand the words we use, how we understand and use language. When two bodies understand one another, they share a form of life. This is because words, in Wittgenstein's convincing characterization of language, only have meaning in shared use. So, the word "good" as we use it in our examples is not a word that has a meaning in itself. We learn "good" in activity, in our relations with one another. We can say "good" is the product of our form of life. Our understanding of good is a part of our form of life.

Because Aristotle speaks of virtue, and we do not have

external to those it rules over. It shapes beings, penetrates every domain, even those regarded as the most intimate, rationalizes and puts to work more and more swaths of existence, just as it produces an imaginary that is ever more distant and reified.

What we call communism starts from there, from that knowledge, from the need to wrest away from the enemy, the need which forms the texture of our being. No longer to be the people of capital. In this respect, our inquiry is in the spirit of those who believed that the questioning of everyday life cannot be disassociated from the political struggle.

All the revolutionary movements that have either refused to address this question, or that have found various injunctive solutions to it, appear to us shallow, or inimical to our existence.

On this point, Fourier wrote, sixty years after the French revolution: "The vandalism of '93 came very close to abruptly producing a second revolution just as marvelous as the first was horrible. The entire human race came near to its deliverance: the barbarous and savage civilized order would have vanished forever, if that national convention which was trampling all the prejudices underfoot had not relented before the only one it was important to strike down, that of marriage... This was the last entrenchment of civilization: it held firm and soon resumed the offensive, regaining its whole dominion." This need to link how to live and how to win is what will keep us shielded from common programs projected into an ideal future.

So we start from experimentation, and from the construction of commonalities [communs]. We found ourselves and still find ourselves in the midst of struggle, in the effervescence of squats, in the cracks that every milieu contains, in our houses, in places that are not reducible to their commodity function, in territories constituted by the idea of secession, in the street.

To "live communism" means to inhabit wherever we are; to elaborate thought the way one sharpens weapons; to support the common through practical acts, involving both the material means of existence and the means of attack

LOVE

Le Love Gang

I. Love, love will tear us apart, again // On the vital need to tackle the question of loving

Women and love are underpinnings. Examine them and you threaten the very structure of culture.

Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*

The whole spectacle of the West has trouble masking the emotional poverty of its liberal mores, and we ourselves are tested by the expectation which the mere utterance of the word “love” raises.

We wished not to deal mainly with the question of the couple. If it does appear in our reflection it's precisely because a knot is found there (one that we'll try to undo): there where the West has made the couple and love homogeneous and inseparable notions. What to do with the idea that the couple is the only possible space for an intensity? In the idea of love we hope to identify a multiplicity of tensions to be invested, revealed, veiled, questioned. The affects (and love, which in one way or another retains a special importance) are battlegrounds. We sense that they are at the same time a powerful lever in the upheaval that we envisage for this world, and the pitfall, the dark obstacle on which we risk coming to foolish grief.

The idea of love and that of the individual form the two jaws of an apparatus of civilization from which we'd do well to extract ourselves. We must reclaim ways of relating to each other that combat the permanent injunction to return to order.

What was a new intuition forty years ago is now a simple given, and one that has been described a thousand times: capitalism is no longer a political and economic system that's

virtue, only whatever, we will say that what Aristotle calls virtue is a common inclination toward a particular form of life; the whatever that holds us together as friends is a certain unspeakable fact of our living in common without justice. Justice, Aristotle's justice, is excluded even from his virtuous friendship. Why is this the case? Because we do not treat friends justly, we treat them as friends—friends, as we together understand the word, because we share a form of life. Friends do not share some-thing (virtue or justice, for instance), they are shared by the experience of friendship.

I guess a part of where I'm trying to go with this Wittgenstein-Agamben connection, at the moment so far removed from friendship, is that what is good is dependent on our form of life, it is dependent upon how we always already act in the world. If we understand something when it is communicated it is by always already having experienced it. When I say friend and we hear different things, it is because while we share some activity in common we inhabit different forms of life.

If, when I say “friend”, it means to you a certain willingness to throw everything away for a person you've just met, or if you seek out certain intensities because you believe it is the purpose of friendship to share grand and wild experiences, then perhaps we share a form of life—a certain idea of the good life, a common understanding of the word happiness.

To share a form of life is to share potentialities, to inhabit a something that is possible in the future. It is not to be static, to be identified, but to be living in common. Aha! But here we have again Aristotle's friendship. That mistranslation from the beginning: “O my friends, there is no friend!” What if perhaps the translation was supposed to go something like, “He who has many friends, has not a single friend”? This is really then the question of numbers. When one of us calls out “Friends,” how many of us respond?

Aristotle doesn't give us a clear number, but he makes it certain that we understand that true friendship is only

possible with a limited number. So then here suddenly we see, if we didn't already, that really we can't just make anarchy in the world by becoming friends with everyone. That's silly. Our friendships would be meaningless. We all probably already knew this. Any of us who've had friends, or bodies around us we called friend, we know that friendship requires both time and a degree of living together.

There are just too many people for us to be friends with everyone. The more people we try to be friends with, the less time we have to develop each of our friendships. More importantly, though, friendship requires a degree of living together. We can understand this as the ability to develop collective experiences and understandings of the world around our friendship. Living together is a sort of putting our futures together: you have to admit that to some extent, even if we're not getting married, our futures are now intertwined. So, in some sense we've developed together a common goal, even if that goal is the friendship itself—which is to say, now, our form of life—and we can see that our form of life is the possibilities we share AND the good life we create.

Form of life for Wittgenstein isn't a technical term, there's not a number attached to it either, and really philosophers aren't clear if he suggests there's just one human form of life, or if form of life is something akin to culture or subculture or nation—though of course we must heartily reject the idea that form of life is anything with a distinct boundary. Form of life is both the experience of our past and the possibility we share of the future. Yet we inhabit form of life in the present: it is what we are when we speak.

Oh shit, I've just introduced the concept of time. And if I start saying "was," "is," and "will be" all of a sudden I'm going to be talking Heidegger and Being and grammar and shit. Not going there.

Proposition IV // Love

We never know in advance what a body is capable of. Knowing how we are what we are requires a common-notion, something shared: an idea of each other in a singular sense, as a singularity: that we understand our affections, know our differences, love.

10. There are many ways to modify a body. Every apparatus attempts to do just that; but first, we become docile. We are so enamored with power we have even embraced the power that acts against our own. The priest and despot, like bosses, doctors and the police, have always required our sad, injured, governable bodies. We are the basis of their own sick, sad subjectivity, and they ours. Every apparatus of power requires its subjects. "Do not become enamored with power."

11. The couple is one of the most obvious ways with which one can escape the intolerable alienation of individuality. Affects are coded in terms of sexuality and affection understood in terms of sexual intimacy. Each intensity is expressed in the consummation of the sexual act or the expression "I love you." In this light, love is that which separates you and I, and the sexual act, the play of power between us.

The couple closes the circulation of care within the intelligible and therefore acceptable form of sexual relations and codependency. Polyamory attempts to extend intimacy beyond the couple-form, but in each instant reproduces it to the extent that there remains a distinction between those we call partner and friend.

12. "I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant." In the absence of expectation we are able to offer each other whatever relation we enjoy. In this way we are lovable; we are loved for our being such. We belong. Beyond everything we uncover each other, only to find we were always there and are already here. "In one another we will never be lacking."

at the end of yoga, supine on the mat in the dark with my palms up and my eyes closed, i started to cry because i imagined myself as a girl in a bright field of wheat the stalks are swaying in the gentle breeze and i feel this overwhelming urge to protect this little girl version of me but i am helpless to stop what is coming it's like that urge you get, while watching a film, to yell "look out!" to the protagonist who cannot see what is coming but this protagonist is you and she cannot hear you across the ocean of time

she is oblivious
she is relishing the air and the golden sun
her heart open as though the world were a safe and benevolent place
this tranquil scene is utterly unbearable when held against the brutality of everything to come
but she would somehow continue to live
despite everything
she would continue to love the air and the golden sun

when the yoga instructor told us to open our eyes
the field faded
and i could pretend i had not been where i'd been
could erase the emotional distance i had traveled
when told to rest
after so much
movement

this was hot yoga
so it was easy to pass my tears off as sweat

IV. FRIENDSHIP AND EVENT

So, to begin again, from a different position. How do we say "friend"? What does it mean?

In Agamben's essay "The Friend", he notes that friend is a sort of non-predicative term, that is, a term from which it is not possible to establish a class that includes all the things to which the predicate in question is attributed. When I say "I am your friend," we cannot point at what it is that crosses all such utterance; much like the phrase "I love you," whatever it means comes into being at the moment of its being said. It is simply a name which names.

In the curious case of insults, we find that often the insult is not the result of being compared to something undesirable but in being-named as such in a way that one cannot defend oneself. We think of children who insist on calling Nick "Rick," and Nick cannot defend himself because there is simply nothing to defend in the being called as such. There is no way to defend oneself from being called a friend, or being beloved. The naming of the friend as such is an event in itself, it calls forth and brings into being. It is not a definition, it calls upon nothing prior to itself, but it names the being together of those who are there.

How do we say "friend"? I think of those of you in this room whom I would call friend but couldn't, for whom I couldn't say a middle name or perhaps even a first. I certainly know nothing of your virtue, but you do, in fact, fall among my group of friends—I would even go so far as to say you are my friends, my good friends, my true friends. We know this when we are together and do what only friends can do. It's not that we are tied together by utility, though certainly we use each other in certain ways to achieve a goal. And we're not particularly tied by pleasure, at least most of us. Our relationship is based on something else, and this something else is what we call whatever, our form of life, an entirely contingent and arbitrary but intimately important set of practices in which we share a common language, we understand one another. This is

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virtually the opposite of what Aristotle would define as a true friend. What ties us together is not language—remember, it's the activity between us that gives us language. Rather, it is silence, and what happens in silence - Friendship.

Friendship, then. Friendship as event. I think, perhaps (Nietzsche's dangerous "perhaps") I have shown that friendship, at least inasmuch as Aristotle has conceived it for Western societies influenced by his thought, is impossible. Impossible, not for the least reason, that we are wholly unwilling to accept how he defines equality within the virtuous friendship. Because for Aristotle, within the true and virtuous friendship, my friend and I accept our roles as they are and we respect one another for who we are—that is, virtuous bodies. We who do not respect property, authority, monogamy, prudence and other virtues can never, Aristotle says, have true friends. Not virtuous friends in Aristotle's sense of the word.

But Aristotle's sense of the word is inadequate for our form of life. I think that's already clear. Aristotle sees friendship as an attribute, a state of being. Really he's going about it all wrong. Perhaps Aristotle already has friends—we can assume as much if he's writing such chapters in his Nichomachean Ethics. His definitions and descriptions of friends read as a sort of praise of his friends and what they already share. We imagine he wrote this toward the end of his life, as he sorted through his collection of friends, judging and appraising their worth.

For us, though, friendship is still an unknown. Or at least, since you are still here reading, friendship is an activity that we are trying to discern as we are doing it. For Agamben, and so for us, friendship is what occurs in its utterance, that is, what occurs here, there, when I call you "friend." I'm not pointing here to anything in my lecture or notes, but here, to the lived activity outside language. We do not want friendship to be another term we use to describe things as they are; for us friendship is still an event, an unknown.

From Derrida, we receive an ominous and illuminating message: "Friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by

a tableau of absence
or trace of an encounter
poorly understood

why write all this?
why write anything?
except to document all the ways in which experiences accrue
to a body that does not know how to make sense of them

no matter how much ink we spill we will never be able to get
at it the epistemological limitations of relationships
these invisible micro-transferences
the impossibility of ever knowing where someone else is at
or the weird doubt you sometimes feel upon reflection
when you wonder if you ever really knew someone at all

what Lily wanted to understand on the phone was the
process by which a friend becomes a stranger
the metaphysical fragility of the categories
"friend" and "stranger"
and how the transmogrification of the friend into stranger
throws your being into crisis

because who i am is only ever in relation to (you)

.

.

what have you become, passing through this life
and who are you in relation to who you were
after you have been mutated
by everything you've ever touched.

some damage
some joy or the way joy can never exclude damage

why do you keep putting your hands in the fire?
to touch the fire—
it was worth it to get burned

i stood near the refrigerator watching the dance
drifting in and out of human consciousness

i was mesmerized by their demonstration of how to poach an egg and they were excited to show me because they knew that i was a lover of eggs.

to poach the egg they made a whirlpool in the pot
and carefully dropped the eggs in.
as i stared into the pot at the floating eggs the pot opened up
into a whole universe
each egg became a coagulating celestial body

when they started to make the Hollandaise sauce they said,
“come here. check this out.”
they were separating the egg yolks from the whites with their hands.

i was impressed.
“i thought you would like it,” they said.
after working in food prep for years
they could crack eggs with one hand.

the blueprint for making diner food seemed to reside deep
in their unconscious sometimes bubbling up to the surface in
their art or in the form of surrealist food imagery
children’s book drawings depicting floating food and
trapdoors

the morning they left my house their glasses broke.
i woke up to them frantically trying to fix them, and then
running out the door to catch their bus
in the corner of the room they left a little pile of things
a sweater, some tights

the objects are themselves—

silence.” Here we challenge Aristotle directly. Friendship isn’t the result of endless chatter and judgment of each other’s virtue, but a shared experience in which we live in common and find ourselves headed in the same direction. To think alongside Wittgenstein again, there is that which can be expressed in propositions of language—say, how I call you “friend”—and that which can only be shown and never converted into words. Derrida’s point, taken from Nietzsche, is that friends allow this whatever to lie between them, in silence.

For us, we share a form of life with an understanding of how the word “friend” is supposed to be used. But this doesn’t mean we can use it. There is something missing if I simply call you all “friends”—it seems insincere, perhaps ungrammatical. After all, just because you’ve shown the willingness to sit through my bullshit doesn’t mean we’ve had the event of friendship. Does it? I guess it depends. It’s a perhaps. It depends on how this lecture ends.

For Aristotle and his virtuous friends, they are friends because they are virtuous. And a part of their virtue lies in understanding each other’s roles and what they are due each other as friends. The utilitarian friends are friends because they can exchange a quantifiable equal amount of money, or votes, or power, or whatever. Friends of pleasure have an understanding of what they expect from either their lover or beloved. A proper inequality. But friends of virtue exchange and share equal virtue, they practice virtue together. They each give the other what is due them, although the exchange rate may mean trading money for honor, or praise for assistance, and so on. Aristotle names his friends after the event has concluded, and although he claims that his friendship is without justice, it is not until the quantities are calculated that one may or may not be called friend. This is friendship that demands the possible, and for that it deserves nothing but our contempt. Aristotle tests others and then names them as friends. Whatever it names has already disappeared.

For friendship to have meaning, it must be named in the event, and the event to which it gives name must carry in

itself the fullest meaning of friendship. All friendship, as we have seen, carries within it the possibility of its collapse. But while Aristotle would demand that we be virtuous, we must ask what friendship becomes without virtue; when we prefer to take what is rather than some nonexistent noble virtue.

So, while Aristotle looks for those who are friends and finds himself lacking (O my friends! There is no friend!), we friends of anarchy must look for friendships of potentiality and becoming, always leaving open the perhaps of total collapse. This is a friendship that truly deserves the name—because we know, from where we are now, that we are never assured of adequation between our naming, the concept, and the event of friend. We know friendship must leave a place open for that which can still take place—by chance—that possibility that would be more favorable to the love whose just name would be friendship.

We know that when friendship claims to be realized, there is in fact no friendship. We utter “Friend” and “I love you” in moments of wild abandon before the scores are calculated, when our relationships are at their most delicate and fragile. So, Friend is something we are trying to create, ever trying to create. We are in search of a singularity, the becoming-friendship of love, under the same name of friendship, but this time under the right name, just this one time, adjusted rather to an incomparable time, unique and without concept, a particular date, between two. The friendship of these friends, if there are any of this kind, should there be any of this kind, should take place one fine day, in the chance of a moment, an instant, with no assurance of duration, without the firm constancy of Aristotelian virtue—this is the condition of the pure potentiality of friendship.

We should immediately recognize the problem of such friends, those we name as such. It contains a “perhaps,” a structural uncertainty, a certain stammering in our voice as we speak. Friend. We never know our friends, we only name them.

but are you touching anything?
are your limbs falling off as you enter the earth's atmosphere?
is your hair on fire?

embarrassment brought me back to earth

the weird dissociative state i was in—my manic ebullience—
put enormous distance between me and this new friend,
who was waiting for me to let them cook the dinner they had
planned with care

i sensed the distance and felt ashamed of the way i acted
though they were not trying to shame me
i had simply fallen through a mental wormhole that led me to
a different world

when i returned to my “self” i felt terribly alone
doomed to dwell in a world that no other being could ever
possibly penetrate or understand

is this the survivor's universe?
in all the books i read on trauma there is reference to
survivors not feeling human

they think of themselves as aliens, monsters, witches,
vampires, whores, dogs, rats, snakes, cyborgs.

before i read the books i already knew this from Bhanu.
but i did feel that the new friend could meet me that far
(the space outside the human.)

when we got to the kitchen their mood shifted
they came out of their silence and i was happy to again be
occupying the same world as another sentient being
they moved through the kitchen with the finesse of a
ballerina, for they were practiced in the art of making
Eggs Benedict

when Kiki d'Aki's *El Futuro* came on i thought about the beginning of my relationship with Carrie dancing to the song together in the kitchen of the copycat theater in Baltimore

how strange it is to have this beginning-to-end view of a relation
how impossible it was to be so in love with someone so abusive

i looked down at my hands the watch ashley gave me
the garnet ring my mother gave me when i was 11
who was i, in that moment, when i was filled up with everything i had ever lived through?

i was nothing at my core
an assemblage of encounters and the marks left by them
the accessories i had received as gifts seemed proof of this

how did Hanna know, when she wrote the Mask Magazine article, that all of my accessories are gifts from friends and lovers?

i started to ramble manically as the force of the memory-deluge intensified i wanted to say that at the end of it all there is light
and i thought, perhaps...
perhaps it is necessary to travel through violence to reach the "exalted frequency"

to enter the illuminated world through the blood-stained gate screaming ("the wailing that accompanies entrance into and expulsion from sociality")

what had i learned from reading Fred Moten and Bhanu Kapil about the space opened up by trauma?

the space where everything becomes terribly proximate

"I love you" is a promise... The promise neither describes nor prescribes nor performs. It does nothing and thus is always vain... "I love you" says nothing (except a limit of speech,) but it allows to emerge the fact that love must arrive and that nothing, absolutely nothing, can relax, divert, or suspend the rigor of this law. The promise does not anticipate or assure the future: it is possible that one day I will no longer love you, and this possibility cannot be taken away from love—it belongs to it. It is against this possibility, but also with it, that the promise is made, the word given. Love is its own promised eternity, its own eternity unveiled as law.

Of course, the promise must be kept. But if it is not, that does not mean that there was no love, nor even that there was not love. Love is faithful only to itself. The promise must be kept, nonetheless love is not the promise plus the keeping of the promise. It cannot be subjected in this way to verification, to justification, and to accumulation... Love is the promise and its keeping, the one independent from the other. How could it be otherwise, since one never knows what must be kept?

—Jean Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*

V. THERE IS NO FRIEND

Now then, section five. Is this doing philosophy? I don't think I've covered anything I said I would in the description. My throat hurts from cigarettes. I'm getting exhausted and I'm not sure I'm getting anywhere. All these pulled quotes from Derrida have gotten me nowhere. And this odd claim, whatever I've been getting towards, that there are no friends, only events, moments, of friendship, and perhaps we have not even had one yet. How do we even know afterwards? It strikes one almost as cold and empty and a bit sociopathic.

Moreover, how can any meaningful politics come from this? I don't know how much time I've taken up in reading this

to you so far. It feels like I've written a lot but not really said much. It's 1 pm, yesterday, I'm in the lobby and most of you are in some workshop or another having a common experience that will give you new language, or new ways in which to speak with one another. I am out here alone, in my own world, writing, writing in silence in what I hope is a successful attempt to find friends. Perhaps you'll be in luck, and at the end of this I'll take questions after all. I'm sure you're thrilled at the prospect.

I mentioned earlier the Whatever, a term I'll readily admit has been abused by some in our anarchic milieu of late. Agamben mentions that the Whatever Singularity is "whatever you want, that is, loveable." He wrote a whole book about it; it's pretty obtuse, but I'll collapse it and say basically I think he means we should stop looking around trying to find friends and instead start making friends, or, doing friendship, with those bodies with whom we share a form of life, the ones who understand what we mean when we say "friend," or more importantly understand when we do friendship. And in doing so, we are creating a new form of life, developing new practices—creating new meanings for friendship in friendship. This is largely, I think, grounded in the idea that we can lose ourselves—our predicates, our identities—in the Event. Maybe you've experienced this total loss of self, maybe not. I have, but then my self was found and things turned out pretty shitty. So really, the whatever might be a good concept for philosophy, and if you want experimentation and danger and the possibility and ever-present threat of being hurt—which is basically what friendship is, right—then Whatever might be a good way to go.

So far we seem to understand that friendship, at least as a thing to have as a relational quality, friendness or whatever we might say, might be impossible. It's like running en masse with the cops closing in, and we call out "Friends!"—and they are there, or else they aren't. Even the naming, the event of friendship, is not itself what makes friends. It's something else something beyond us, something whatever, that propels and captures us and forces us to be friends. And this something—

by the grocery store because they wanted to cook me Eggs Benedict and fried polenta as an expression of appreciation for the generosity i had shown them during their stay
i drifted through the grocery store in a sleep-deprived daze while they plucked the ingredients from the shelf with grace they accidentally grabbed crumpets instead of english muffins

when i heard "crumpets" i thought of Holly saying, "would you like a crumpet?" in her english accent.

because i was so sleep-deprived and emotionally wound up from processing so many intense situations, my mental filters were malfunctioning

memories kept firing at random and i continued to slip deeper and deeper into this universe of private associations

sometimes laughing to myself at the tragicomic absurdity of existence evidenced by the twisted thoughts that were marching through my brain.

as we were listening to music in my bed the flashbacks grew more intense and vivid

when the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir came on i was transported back to one of my Mesilla nighttime walks along the arroyo beneath the moon and stars the desert night was so emotionally charged

i remember the pony i would see on my walks
how it would come to the fence to greet me
and how seeing the pony would sometimes cause me to stop crying because the pony was just hanging out beneath the full moon

in the letter i wrote to Matthew i also mourned the loss of socialites that revolve around the sharing of food
“i no longer have anyone to cook for. what feels better than cooking for friends? almost nothing. it is terrible to have no one to cook for.”

writing to Matthew made me think about the last time i cooked with someone
though i was just getting to know them, the act of cooking with them created a feeling of familiarity

in the kitchen—by way of the Lily’s phone call, Matthew’s letter, and the essay about visiting Matyas—i thought about the slipperiness of relations
and sunk into the “objective” view of my life
where everything i’ve ever experienced has meaning
simply because it happened
and i am made up of all these encounters.

to inhabit the memory is to move beyond good and bad
the interpretation is silenced by the raw sensory experience of it

in such moments the self that wants to ward off hurt, abandonment and loss dies
and all that is left is a bundle of mysterious relations
the facts of a life, which i experience as pure dissociative joy,
and my body: a trace of everything that has been lived
like my words which together do not constitute my “work”
but rather are an extension of my body a trace of relation

when the memory becomes vivid
there is truth and nothing else
you understand everything by forgetting who you are
you become who you are by forgetting who you are

the last night the new friend was at my house we stopped

beyond or something else also creates the conditions in which our friendships collapse.

We were friends and have become estranged. But this was right... That we have to become estranged is the law above us; by the same token we should also become more venerable for each other—and the memory of our former friendship more sacred. There is probably a tremendous but invisible stellar orbit in which our very different ways and goals may be included as small parts of this path; let us rise up to this thought. But our life is too short and our power of vision too small for us to be more than friends in the sense of this sublime possibility! — Let us then believe in our star friendship even if we should be compelled to be earthly enemies.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

The end of friendship takes on new meaning if we are thinking the eventness of friendship. We could say friendship ends with its enunciation: “FRIEND!” And then it is gone. Or we could say friend points to our being-there-together, being-in-common, that activity at which my words point when I voice “FRIEND.”

But we would be missing a properly grammatical use of the word friend if we were only able to imagine friends here and around us. When we say friend to those far off, we are referring to a certain distance, the distance itself, the nothing that is being shared at that moment. There is no activity of friendship outside my naming it as such; when my friend back home is off in her own world living her own life, perhaps I’m not even on her mind. But friend doesn’t refer to a different state of affairs—it refers to this one, in which we are not thinking of one another, or even perhaps when we are thinking crossly of one another.

If we are attempting to move away from thinking of friend as a quality, “being friend,” and rather friendship as an event, “doing friend,” we have to locate this time element

within the event that marks off its existence—the beginning and end of the event.

Or else, it was a friendship that collapsed, momentarily, exactly in the manner in which it began—an inopportune moment in which we were thrust forward toward one another and could only respond in the manner in which we were ourselves: our form of life revealed itself to one another and we found—briefly—community, friendship, love together. Alternately, we can imagine that, having suddenly altered the terms of our activity, we might have found ourselves inhabiting a different form of life in which our activities took on completely different meanings and we could only know one another as enemies.

The silence that preserves friendship is more than the activity between friends: it is the nothing and emptiness—which is to say, truth—that we hold between us. Derrida has caused us to say that friends keep silent about the truth. This is less enigmatic than we might think. Our friends, those to whom we expose our vulnerability and ugliness, preserve friendship by keeping quiet on these matters. What a horror it would be to hear what our friends actually know about us! And that much worse to read it.

Amidst a black eruption, the supernova that is the destruction of our star of friendship, every gesture takes on new meaning. Our words mismatch; our attempts to communicate can only result in conflict.

But: enemy. The correlate of that Aristotle quote or misquote: O enemies, there is no enemy. If “friend” brings with it no necessary precondition, then in reference to “enemy”—this enemy who has relinquished her silence, our silence—we cannot accept any prescribed manner of dealing with the enemy. After all, just as each friendship blooms in its own way, so too does each bursting star erupt in its own way. How to contain a dying star, without ourselves exploding; how to see the beauty of a dying star?

I apologize. Distractions. All of you are here in the room with me now; not now, as I read this to you (as you read this

observe what happens to the texture of your writing
the moment you are without addressee
(do you even write at all?)

i opened the post with the question
have i forgotten how to write?
perhaps i have forgotten how to write you
to say anything to an-other
or to conjure the object of memory
by tricking it into presence

you: the self understood through a linguistic relation
because there is only relation and no self
only the “third body” created between entities

i thought about the loss of the you, and the structure of
apostrophe, as i thought about a letter my best friend
Matthew sent me for my birthday
when we lived together we would go to a local gay bar and
write letters to people on our DIY stationery
we were compulsive in our desire to connect
always dropping our whimsical musings into everyone's
mailboxes getting all twisted up inside over abstract crushes
we had probably idealized

Matthew's letters are always nostalgic
no matter where he's at he starts from the place of loss
from the belief that his life once contained a magic that is
now irrecoverable
in this letter he reflects on the domestic traditions that were
developed by the New College queers as they were caring for
a dying friend

one of these traditions was using the Joy of Cooking as a kind
of bible cooking was practiced as a form of care, as queer
home-making

because we live in two different worlds
the world of the free and the world of the unfree
me on the side of the free but bound to the world of the
unfree by a blood relation

what does it mean to grow apart
to evolve on separate islands
into the creatures you become mostly by happenstance
the finch or the bird of paradise

on the phone Lily and i congratulated ourselves
for staying friends across the distance
i assured her that is possible to remain in relation
though the quality of the relation is sometimes altered
when you try to re-sync after being apart for years

when i wanted to write that morning i was thinking about
an essay i wrote a few years ago about traveling to Budapest
to visit Matyas, a Hungarian man who had been my best
friend while i lived in Kunming, China. i probably would have
forgotten this piece of writing completely had Dodie Bellamy
not spoken of it glowingly.

though the piece of writing is only a skeletal description
of a neutral encounter, the piece has remained dear to me
perhaps because in writing it i learned two very important
lessons: that human connection is all about timing
and that staying in relation is all about rhythm- remaining
in-sync, or becoming synchronized inhabiting a similar tempo
or being near each other when your daily tempos get thrown
off beat and you suddenly find yourself experiencing each
other through that rupture
through the cuts in your lives

“swerve with me”
observe who comes into your life during those moments
you lose control

without me), but now, the time of writing. Now, the time of
verbalization. The panel about “anarchist practice” is about to
begin. I’m once again alone in a crowd of friends. I don’t want
to think of supernovas; too depressing. Broken hearts perhaps
suit me better, at least in my current frame of mind.

I don’t know, maybe you wanted a strategy outline or
something, but it’s nearly five o’clock in the morning and so it’s
come to this. Performance art, or lived poetry. Some crap like
that. Really, that’s all I’ve got. Potentiality, man. I’m not talking
about the T-word, or make total destroy necessarily. What we
need is the demand to experiment; experimentation to find
the pure friendship and how to reproduce it. Friendship that
expands, extends. Friendship. That relationship in which we
allow ourselves to be most vulnerable. And somehow where
we find the most strength.

Friendship: we’re back at the beginning now. Didn’t
you just hear me? I pretty much said expand friendship to
everyone. But now we’re thinking about events of friendship,
the possibility of friendship. Not as any predicate or any
prescriptive behavior. We want new openings with which to
engage with others, always on the verge of collapse but always
on the verge of exploding and being the one moment in which
true friendship reveals itself.

Where can we find this? Among friends? Among
strangers? Can we trust anything that’s been told to us about
friendship, given its history? Given our own history of our
friendships? Each of us is thinking of at least one friendship
that has ended horribly. How do we prepare ourselves for this?
What form of life must we inhabit to undertake a constant
experimentation of friendship and withstand its constant
collapse?

A form of life where—O my friends, there is no friend:
only events of friendship.

Lecture from **NCRISING II**: Asheville, NC.
Text from **VORTEX** // http://cloudfront.crimethinc.com/pdfs/vortex_reading.pdf

Proposition III // Evil

Sadness is evil. Sadness is that affect that distances us from our power before diminishing it and us with it. When we encounter someone who makes us sad, they are not a stranger such as the hostis, to whom no relation exists, they are an enemy. In this way our enemy is also evil and so must we be.

8. To be a friend, one must also be capable of being an enemy. To the extent that someone makes a friend sad, one may also experience such an affection. Unfortunately often, one retreats from such shared sadness, distancing the self from the other instead of taking the friend's enemy as their own. This is one of many ways friends can become enemies

Friendship is a very volatile relation. There are no absolute friends. As we become more transparent to each other, we also become vulnerable and therefore more susceptible to sadness. In our most enjoyable experiences of elation, when we are most powerful, it is our friends who happen to have the greatest capacity to weaken us. In such an event only nostalgia helps us hide the fact that a friend has become an enemy.

9. To attend to the very material conditions that enable us to experience existence as enjoyable requires us to be prepared for the conditions of permanent conflict possible within every encounter, affect and idea. The conditions of conflict are that we "strike together." In one sense, we strike with or against our enemies, an actual affliction; in another, we strike with our friends against a common enemy according to our shared affects. After all, we are at war.

Violence does not produce power, it can only reduce it. When we approach our enemies with violence it is only in order to reduce their power. In doing so, we risk our own. Our power, however, is always already at stake when we encounter an enemy. We have nothing to lose but our sadness in our every attempt at an unmediated joy.

THE FRAGILITY OF FRIENDSHIP

Jackie Wang

have i forgotten how to write?
i've forgotten how to write.
that night, when the thought occurred to me to write,
i wanted to write something entirely different
from what i wrote.

as i sat at the kitchen table sipping on the holy basil tea
i thought about all the people i have known
people lost to time and space
people falling in and out of relation
the inscrutability of it all

Lily called that morning
a college friend she had not spoken to in ten years
had just died of AIDS-related complications
that morning she started to write an essay called
The Geography of Friendship
an essay about distance and estrangement
she couldn't get over the fact that this person she had known
so well fell out of her life completely and now does not exist
on this planet at all.

who was the person who died
and who was the person she knew?
i have sometimes thought about this when thinking about the
brother i knew before prison and the brother i cannot know
now because i am not privy to his universe